Report on Options for Graduate Union Affiliation at MIT

MIT GSU Affiliation Committee*

Fall 2019

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I Introduction

The MIT Graduate Student Union (MIT GSU) formed in early 2018 after the circulation of an anonymous survey assessing interest in unionization among graduate student-workers. Our union started with fewer than a dozen members; since then, the GSU has grown to include over 300 graduate student-workers across over 20 departments. Together, we have built a strong and passionate organization, and we continue to expand our membership, build new and more inclusive organizational structures, and develop a deeper understanding of the struggles we face as members of the MIT graduate community.

As we approach critical mass, the time is quickly coming to move into the next stage of our campaign by selecting an international labor union to partner, or "affiliate", with. This partner union will provide us with the strategic and logistical resources needed to further strengthen our organization and build up to a public campaign. The affiliation decision is an important milestone in the development of our union, and as such it necessitates thorough research, inclusive analysis, and democratic execution. To this end, the Affiliation Committee has been tasked with contacting potential affiliation partner organizations, collecting information regarding these organizations and the affiliation process at large, and synthesizing this information for the union's general body. Much of this research has focused on exploring the potential of partnering with three international unions: the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the United Auto Workers (UAW), and the United Electrical Workers (UE). Each of these three organizations offers a different combination of expertise, resources, and strategy, and it is important to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of partnering with each of them.

This union strongly believes in the importance of democratic and inclusive decision-making in all matters; as such, the Affiliation Committee has produced this document to ensure that as many graduate workers can be fully informed before a vote is held by the general body to choose a partner organization in Fall 2019. This report represents the culmination of the Affiliation Committee's research into the affiliation process and each of the potential partner unions, and it can serve as a detailed reference for graduate workers to gain a thorough understanding of the considerations which will impact the affiliation decision. A one-page flier is also available for quick reference, as is a table with details of the Affiliation and Organizing Committee's meetings with union representatives and graduate workers at other universities used to construct this document (listed in Appendix C). It is the hope of the Affiliation Committee that all union members will use these resources and talk together so that the affiliation vote is as democratic as possible.

This report aims to achieve the following goals:

1. To explain the utility and necessity of affiliating with a larger union
2. To provide a brief background on graduate student unionization in the U.S.
3. To document the extensive research carried out by the Affiliation and Organizing Committees
4. To provide detailed information on the differences between candidate unions; and
5. To motivate the Affiliation Committee's formal recommendation for the choice of affiliation partner.

II Why Affiliate?

Affiliation is a partnership that our local union enters into with a larger labor union. This larger organization will provide our union with access to important resources, including: experienced professional staff to guide and support us, skills training, material resources, and connections to other union members in our region and across the U.S. Affiliation also enhances the legitimacy of our efforts. In order to fund these critical supports, members of our union pay membership dues (see the next section of this memo for more information on how membership dues help us build our power).

The nature of this support will vary over the life of our union. In our current phase of organizing, an affiliation partner will train us in how to talk to colleagues about their work struggles and how a union could help; help us "map" our workplaces, so we can connect with different campus networks; and provide us resources to develop promotional materials (i.e., website, social media, pamphlets).

Once we have generated enough support, we have the option to proceed to a "card campaign." This is when we would ask our co-workers to support the union by signing membership cards. The university may choose to recognize the validity of our union if a large majority of graduate employees have signed cards. If not, we would proceed to a formal union election. If a majority of graduate employees voting supports the union, then our union wins. During these critical campaign phases, the affiliation partner will increase its support, mainly by providing additional organizers to advise us on strategy and assist in organizing and campaigning.

After our union is recognized as valid by MIT, we will negotiate our first employment contract. During the contract negotiation phase, an affiliation partner will help us develop bargaining goals, draft contract language, and negotiate with the MIT administration. Our affiliation partner can also leverage its connections to other partners in the broader labor movement, members of the press, or elected officials to pressure MIT into meeting our demands. Finally, during the active dates of our contract, our affiliation partner will provide support as needed, including staff assistance, training for departmental leaders, and legal support to help resolve workplace issues (known as "grievances").

The point at which our union establishes a formal partnership with the national union varies, depending on the organization we decide to affiliate with. In a pre-majority union model (also known as non-majority or members-only), our partnership is formalized early on. Prior to an election campaign, the local union and national organization come together to arrive at a formal agreement of expectations for dues collection, staff support, and material support. In a majority model, the partnership is formalized to some degree once student-workers sign membership cards with the national union's name attached; by signing cards, student-workers agree to be represented by the union. After a successful election, the union becomes the exclusive bargaining representative of bargaining unit members. Dues payment begins once our union ratifies a contract.

By affiliating with a larger national union, we gain access to a powerful network of workers joined in solidarity across many types of jobs and geographic regions and a central pool of resources to provide the services described above. With the support of this larger, national network, we can lobby with other graduate workers on a wide range of issues that affect our lives, such as anti-discrimination legislation or research funding reforms. We can even partner with teachers, nurses, and other workers to fight climate change and other pressing social problems.

Our affiliation partner should not be mistaken for an outside party that will unionize the graduate workforce for us, and determine strategic priorities on our behalf. The MIT graduate union is *organized by and for us*, and will continue to exist, and be effective, so long as this is true.

Experience from other graduate unionization campaigns has demonstrated that an affiliation partnership is critical to our union's success and longevity. The administration has worked with other elite private universities to oppose the rights of graduate workers to unionize, clearly stating their opinion in amicus briefs filed jointly during the 2000 New York University case and the 2016 Columbia University case.[*1] With an endowment worth $16.4 billion, MIT has the means to wage a deep and prolonged anti-union campaign against our efforts.[†2] We need the resources and strategic expertise to match this level of material strength. This fight will be led by us, the graduate workers of MIT, but we face a greater chance of success with the close aide of our experienced labor allies.

[*] Amicus brief submitted by MIT, Ivy League, et al. in opposition to recognition of graduate workers at Columbia University as employees.
[†] Endowment value is as of fiscal year-end 2018.

III Background on Graduate Student Unionization in the U.S.

This section provides background on the rules governing the employment status and organizing rights of graduate workers in the U.S., the recent history of graduate worker organizing at U.S. colleges and universities, and the organizing committee's plans amid an uncertain political environment. It then describes the role of membership dues in helping our union to build power and fight hard for the interests of the graduate community.

III.A The history and politics of graduate worker organizing in the U.S.

Graduate labor unions have existed at *public* universities across the U.S. for nearly 50 years. Through a union, student-workers who teach and conduct research on the university's behalf can join together to negotiate with university representatives for better pay and workplace conditions. Student-organizers at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (AFT) negotiated the first graduate union contract in 1970.[3] Academic labor unions formed at Rutgers in New Jersey (AAUP/AFT) in the early 1970s[4], followed by the University of Michigan (AFT) in 1974.*[5] Student-workers at UMass Amherst and UMass Boston (both UAW) have had union protection since 1991 and 2001, respectively.[6,7] As of 2016, more than 64,000 graduate student-workers were protected by unions at 28 public universities in nine states.†[8]

The organizing rights of graduate employees at *public* universities such as these are governed primarily by state public-sector labor laws.[9] Besides recent state and federal political efforts to undermine public-sector union membership generally, the employment status of graduate teachers and researchers at public universities has been relatively stable. In contrast, the status of graduate employees who engage in similar work at private universities has been contested in recent decades.

The rights of private-sector workers to unionize is protected and regulated by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which Congress passed in 1935 as part of the New Deal. *As employees of MIT, Sections 7 and 8 of the NLRA protect our rights to engage in collective action, with or without a recognized union, and prohibit acts of retaliation by those who oppose our efforts.* Section 7 also protects the rights of individuals who wish to refrain from participating in unionization efforts.[10] Regardless of our employment status, as graduate students, our rights to organize are protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of peaceful assembly.

The primary enforcer of the NLRA is the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), an independent federal agency with headquarters in Washington, D.C. and 26 regional offices (including in Boston).‡ The NLRB is governed by a five-person board whose members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate.[11] As workers at a private (non-profit) organization (i.e., MIT), our status as employees under the NLRA, and therefore our ability to form a legally recognized union, is decided by the NLRB. A federal board ruling in a particular case involving a single institution sets legal precedent that determines the employment rights of graduate workers at private uni-

*More information on graduate employee unions at public universities, as collected by the Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions, can be found here.

†Namely: California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

‡More information about the NLRBs role can be found here.

versities everywhere.* Currently, the NLRB's board consists of three Trump appointees and one Obama appointee. Democratic-majority boards tend to favor workers, while Republican-majority boards tend to favor managers.

In 2001, following an October 2000 NLRB ruling that graduate student-workers at New York University were employees under the NLRA† [13], the university's graduate union negotiated the first contract at a private university in the U.S.‡ In 2004, after the NLRB's Boston regional office ordered that a graduate union election be held at Brown University, following a recognition petition by organizers, administrators filed an appeal to the federal board requesting that it overturn the 2000 ruling involving the employment status of NYU's graduate workers. The board, then under the George W. Bush administration, ruled in the university's favor, thus denying all private graduate employees the right to unionize. [14] Most recently, in August 2016, a more worker-friendly iteration of the board ruled on a petition filed by graduate student-workers at Columbia University, this time deciding in their favor. [8] This reversed precedent, resulting in graduate employees at all private universities being legally recognized as employees once again under the NLRA and thus able to unionize.

The 2016 decision precipitated a wave of private university organizing. In October 2018, Brandeis and Tufts (both affiliated with the Service Employees International Union, or SEIU) became the second and third private universities, respectively, to ratify a graduate union contract; they were soon joined by graduate unions at the New School (UAW) and American (SEIU). [15]

At present, following successful unionization elections, graduate student-workers at Brown (AFT), Columbia (UAW), Georgetown (AFT), and Harvard (UAW) are negotiating contracts. Campaigns in earlier stages are ongoing at multiple other institutions, including Boston College (UAW), Boston University (UAW), Northeastern (UAW), Northwestern (AFT), Princeton (AFT), University of Chicago (AFT), and Yale (UNITE HERE).§ A complete listing of graduate unionization efforts, both public and private, can be found here.¶

Technically, the 2016 decision still holds; thus, graduate employees at private universities can petition a regional office of the NLRB for formal recognition as a union, to hold an election. This is the "traditional" unionization route, in which the NLRB acts as a third party (separate from both the graduate employees and university administrators) which conducts a union election and enforces the results.

*As this memo will explain, the steps to form a union can vary. Typically, after a group of workers decides to try to form a union at their workplace, they start a membership "card drive," in which organizers gather signed cards from employees indicating their agreement to be represented by a union. Once they gather enough cards – at least 30 percent of employees, but usually from two-thirds or more – the organizers submit a petition with the closest regional office of the NLRB to hold a secret ballot election. The Regional Director is then supposed to rule on the appropriateness of the suggested collective bargaining unit. Assuming it goes forward with the unit as suggested or modified (i.e., will the unit include research and teaching assistants, or just the latter group), the parties then come to an agreement on election terms. At this stage, per federal labor law, the employer can file a request of federal Board review of the Regional Directors decision. If the Board accepts the employers request for review (if it finds compelling reasons to do so), the resulting Board decision establishes national legal precedent. [12] More information on the federal legal statute governing this process, and on this process more generally, can be found here and here.

†This decision reversed a 25-year precedent, which held that graduate assistants – research and teaching assistants – are not statutory employees.

‡More information about the NYU graduate unions history can be found here.

§Graduate student-workers at numerous other private universities are in various stages of union organizing, including Cornell University, Duke University, Emory University, George Washington University, John Hopkins University, Loyola University, University of Pennsylvania, and Washington University, among others.

¶Listing constructed by Jo Meszaros, postdoc/organizer Columbia University.

Unfortunately, given the political make-up of the current board, this route to unionization is not presently viable (additional information on recent board activity is in Appendix B). If we were to petition the regional office for an election, it is expected that MIT would appeal our petition with the more conservative board; the board then would take the opportunity to reverse the Columbia precedent and declare all graduate employees at private universities ineligible for unionization. This possibility is so severe that in February 2018, graduate organizers with Boston College (BC), University of Chicago (UChicago), University of Pennsylvania, and Yale together withdraw their pending NLRB petitions, despite BC, UChicago, and Yale having won their elections.*

As a result, essentially all graduate unions seeking recognition have pursued or are pursuing a strategy of "voluntary recognition," in which organizers generate broad community support for the union, thus pressuring the university into recognizing the union's validity without having to petition the NLRB. Often this strategy includes a formal election, supervised by the NLRB or by another independent third party such as the American Arbitration Association. This is the strategy employed by Harvard, Georgetown, and Brown organizers, all of whom negotiated independent election agreements after securing strong public support; won their elections; and are currently bargaining their first contracts.† Northeastern is pursuing a similar strategy (but is confronting obstacles). When successful, voluntary recognition results in the start of negotiations for a legally binding contract between graduate employees and the university without giving a politically-motivated board the opportunity to reverse precedent.

Part of what we aim to gain in the affiliation process is guidance from experts as to the best path forward. As described in greater detail in the following sections, our three national union options prefer somewhat distinct campaign strategies. AFT and UE emphasize organizing and mobilizing through campaigns focused on particular issues (e.g., graduate student mental health or sexual misconduct in academia) and de-emphasize (though do not preclude) formal elections. In contrast, UAW places heavier weight on quickly building capacity and mobilizing to win a formal election.

Many factors will influence our campaign's trajectory. In the event our union moves ahead with a membership card drive and then with an election, either before or after smaller issue campaigns, our hope is to secure an agreement from the administration that concedes recognition of our union and assures us that they will accept the results.

At present, our main goal is to continue organizing–to talk with graduate community members and empower them to recognize their potential as organizers–with an eye towards building the most inclusive and representative committee possible. We are eager to welcome new contributors to help conduct outreach, devise strategy, and deepen our understanding of MIT student-worker needs and concerns. Building broad support and involvement by the student-worker community will allow us to secure the strongest possible contract.

*Yale pursued a "micro-unit" strategy, meaning their union aimed to encompass selected departments (but not all departments). They won unionization elections in eight of nine departments.[16] Additional sources on this decision, and the status of organizing drives at these institutions, are here, here, here, here, and here.

†Both Brown and Georgetown pursued elections via a neutral third party, the American Arbitration Association, per agreement between student-workers and administrators.

III.B Membership dues and pre-majority unionism

Under federal law, when a majority of employees in a workplace vote to be represented by a union, the union becomes the exclusive bargaining representative of all employees in the unit.* Employees who elect to be part of the union pay membership dues – these dues are a way to pool our resources for the purposes of collective action and are an important source of our power (members of the bargaining unit, who opt not to join the union, do not pay membership dues, but instead pay so-called "agency fees"; in so-called right-to-work states, bargaining unit members who opt out are not required to pay any such fees – for more details, see Appendix A). Membership dues support the work necessary to secure and enforce the strongest possible contract for our community. Dues generate funds to cover rent and materials costs for our day-to-day activities and to pay the wages of a small number of our most highly-involved graduate employee organizers. Membership dues also support new organizing drives, to ensure the union's continued strength, and cover expenses related to representation, like collective bargaining and contract administration.† A portion of membership dues (but not agency fees - again, see Appendix A for more details) also covers the national union's political activity.‡ The exact structure of dues collection and allocation will depend on future decisions made democratically by our union, including the decision of which union with which to affiliate. In general, a large segment of dues will support our local, while the rest will support the union's national work. Where possible in the sections that follow, we explain the uses and allocation of dues.

Most often, dues payment does not begin until union members ratify a contract and the contract takes effect. However, in the face of heightened political challenges§, some unions are exploring models in which members begin fighting for change before they secure a formal contract, supporting their organizing efforts and issue campaign work with partial voluntary dues. This strategy, commonly known as pre-majority unionism, aims to bring about positive workplace change through the organizing efforts of a growing minority of workers, with the goal of eventually achieving majority support. Again, it is worth emphasizing that *U.S. labor law protects the rights of workers to engage in collective action without a recognized union, and prohibits retaliation against workers who do (further, it protects the rights of workers who choose not to participate in unionization efforts).*[17] Through continued organizing around particular workplace issues and the application of pressure through workplace demonstrations, the employer eventually concedes to union demands. This encourages other workers to join the fight. An issue campaign centers on a relatively brief, well-defined set of workplace demands, such as preventing sexual harassment, improving health and safety, or enacting an overtime policy. This is essentially the strategy employed by the national Fight for $15 and OUR Walmart campaigns. Through the use of coordinated walk-outs, strikes, and public education, centered on clear demands–like a $15 national minimum wage or more humane workplace scheduling practices–the campaigns have raised aware-

*The determination of which paid student-worker positions (e.g., TAs, RAs, fellowship recipients, UROPS, etc.) are captured inside the bargaining unit is ultimately made by the NLRB; but in general, members of a bargaining unit share a "community of interest" with respect to wages, benefits, and working conditions. More information is found here.

†This page provides a good summary of membership dues "in action".

‡Once our union ratifies a contract with the MIT administration, and membership dues take effect, MIT, as the employer, will most likely deduct them directly from the paychecks of student-workers in the bargaining unit, and send them to the union with which we choose to partner, a mechanism known as "dues checkoff. This is something we would negotiate.

§For example, rigid federal statute that requires a lengthy election process, a more militant employer community, aggressively anti-union state legislatures (e.g., Wisconsin, where former Governor Scott Walker proposed public sector right-to-work in 2011, which drew thousands of protesters to the states capitol), and the recent U.S. Supreme Court case *Janus v. AFSCME* (see Appendix A for more information).

ness of the challenges of low-wage work, and secured minimum wage increases along with other labor standards improvements.

In an effort to replicate this strategy, MIT GSU is currently undertaking its first issue campaign to address the graduate student mental health crisis at MIT. The campaign demands improved access to mental health care as well as systematic changes to address unsupportive, dysfunctional, or abusive advisor relations. Addressing these demands will improve the quality of life for graduate students in the short term and will build our power moving forward, by engaging a broader spectrum of the bargaining unit to help us organize. The campaign's first Tech op-ed was published September 26, and has received overwhelmingly positive feedback. More information on the campaign can be found in the *#c_mental_health* channel on Slack.

Given the challenges of the political environment, the MIT GSU Affiliation Committee is willing to consider a pre-majority model in which a segment of members may opt in to pay modest monthly dues to support our ongoing organizing and issue campaign work. We urge members to consider the efficacy of this strategy, and how well it may align with the core strategies of each of our three affiliation options.

IV Data Collection

The GSU's OC committed early on to undertaking a comprehensive and systematic consideration of our union affiliation options. To that end, we initially considered as potential partners all unions with any academic labor experience. They are: American Federation of Teachers (AFT); Communication Workers of America (CWA); Industrial Workers of the World (IWW); National Education Association (NEA); Service Employees International Union (SEIU); United Auto Workers (UAW); United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (UE); and UNITE HERE.*

Following a period of outreach over the course of the 2018-19 academic year, affiliation committee members narrowed the GSU's options to AFT, UAW, and UE. Committee members relied on various information sources to construct the most complete picture possible of an affiliation partnership with each union. We aimed to assess them on various dimensions, especially those discussed in Section V.

Our main information sources were in-person information sessions hosted by the OC with representatives of each of the three unions, follow-up phone calls with union officials, and phone interviews of core student-organizers at other universities. We interviewed organizers at campuses where our potential partners either have unions with ratified contracts (e.g., University of California, Berkeley and New York University), or support organizing drives (e.g., Harvard and Northwestern). We were able to connect with many student organizers through the Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions, an organization representing graduate unions throughout North America.[18] In total, committee members conducted meetings or phone calls with national union representatives on fifteen documented occasions, and with a total of seventeen schools on twenty-four documented occasions. Details of these communications are listed in Appendix C. We supplemented information collected through these forums with official union documentation and graduate union websites.

IV.A International Unions not currently under consideration

Below we describe the affiliation committee's correspondence with and reasons for eliminating CWA, IWW, NEA, SEIU, and UNITE HERE. In general, these unions either lack organizing capacity or are focused on organizing workers in other sectors.

IV.A.1 CWA

CWA represents approximately 700,000 workers in various industries, including telecommunications, the airline industry, and healthcare.[19] They also represent graduate workers at two public institutions in New York State[20], the State University of New York (SUNY) system, and the Stony Brook Research Foundation.

According to a March 2019 phone call with a CWA organizer based in the district encompassing the Northeast region, the union's power and membership is concentrated outside of the Boston area, in the New York City region.

*In 2004, the Union of Needle Trades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE) merged with the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) to form UNITE HERE. Today, the union commonly goes by the shortened name.

The person we spoke to advised against our affiliating with CWA, and spoke especially positively of UAW and its resources in the New England region.*

IV.A.2 IWW

We hosted an information session in November 2018 with two local volunteer-organizers from the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW is a revolutionary industrial union based in Chicago. In general, they aim to organize around broader economic, or class-based, concerns, and to form a single union of all working people. Like UAW and UE, their origins focused on resisting craft- or trade-based unionism. Today it has an estimated 3,000 members in the U.S. OC members agreed that due to a lack of resources and higher education organizing experience the IWW would not be a viable affiliation partner for the GSU.

IV.A.3 NEA

The National Education Association is one of the largest labor unions in the U.S. with an estimated 3.2 million members at all levels of the educational system, including about 200,000 higher education employees. Their graduate student-worker affiliates are located at the University of Florida, Florida State University, Florida A&M, University of South Florida, Montana State University, and Southern Illinois University; all but the latter are jointly affiliated with AFT. The state-wide chapter of NEA is known as the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA).

The affiliation committee had an initial e-mail correspondence with NEA/MTA in March 2019. However, the emails stopped from NEA/MTA until July 2019, at which point the committee had already wrapped up their research and narrowed down the affiliation options. We did not find a compelling reason to justify extending the affiliation process and considering NEA/MTA.

IV.A.4 SEIU

SEIU is one of the largest labor unions in the U.S., with an estimated 1.9 million members, employed mostly in healthcare support, public sector, and property services jobs. They also fund the Fight for $15 campaign to raise the national minimum wage. The union has a relatively strong record of organizing graduate students at private universities; and, currently, three of the five graduate worker unions at private universities with ratified contracts are SEIU affiliates (American University, Brandeis University, and Tufts University). Further, as part of their Faculty Forward initiative, they have successfully organized adjunct and other contingent faculty at colleges and universities across the U.S.

When GSU representatives contacted SEIU in September 2018, however, the director of organizing for the state's local, 509, shared that SEIU would not be pursuing new graduate union campaigns; they suggested we contact UAW.† Therefore, as of fairly early in this process, we understood that SEIU would not be an affiliation option for our union.

*Phone call with CWA staff member, dated 3/25/2019.
†Email from SEIU Local 509 organizing director.

IV.A.5 UNITE HERE

UNITE HERE represents graduate workers at Yale University, their only graduate student-worker affiliate. Like SEIU, they traditionally represent workers in service-providing sectors, including hotels, food services, and gaming/casinos. Yale graduate students elected to partner with UNITE HERE as a show of solidarity with other UNITE HERE workers on Yale's campus, including clerical, technical, facilities, and cafeteria employees.

Communications with UNITE HERE ceased after initial correspondence. No further interest was expressed by either party.

V Comparison of Union Affiliation Partners

V.A History & Membership

This section provides basic historical and membership information for each of the three unions, with emphasis on each union's more contemporary higher ed experience. Like the labor movement more broadly, all three unions have seen their memberships shift and decline over the years. As the U.S. political environment has become less amenable to labor unions, many have looked to grow their membership in traditionally non-unionized industries, including professional and service work. In selecting an appropriate affiliation partner, our aim (and challenge) is to balance relevant experience and expertise with a strategy and organizational culture that aligns with the GSU's principles and objectives. Regardless of the union we choose to affiliate with, we would have the support of a powerful network of working people.

V.A.1 AFT

AFT has 1.7 million members across the U.S., including up to 25,000 in Massachusetts (as part of the state federation). While AFT was founded in Chicago in 1916 as a union of public school teachers, today its membership includes five divisions of professional and service employees, including: pre-K through 12th grade teachers; higher education employees; federal, state, and local government employees; paraprofessionals and other school personnel; and nurses and other healthcare professionals. AFT has a large public sector membership, and is the oldest public employee union in the AFL-CIO, the national federation of U.S. labor unions.[21]

AFT boasts the largest higher ed membership of all unions, with an estimated 250,000 workers. The higher education division includes faculty (both full- and part-time), professional staff, and graduate workers, in both public and private, and two- and four-year institutions.[22] AFT has a strong presence in the Midwest, and the longest history in the academic labor movement of any U.S. union, due, in part, to its public sector roots. The Universities of Wisconsin (the Madison and Milwaukee campuses), Michigan, and Illinois (the Chicago, Springfield, and Urbana-Champaign campuses), along with other public universities throughout Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, and Montana are all AFT affiliates with active contracts.*

Midwest private affiliates include Northwestern and the University of Chicago, both of whom are actively organizing. Private affiliates outside the Midwest include Princeton, which is organizing, and Brown and Georgetown, both of which are bargaining their first contracts.

Currently, AFT has two national organizations that aim to advance the interests of graduate workers. The first is the Association of Graduate Employee Locals, or AGEL. Formed in the spring of 1995, it brings together established AFT locals from across the U.S. They hold an annual conference. According to a student-organizer we spoke with from Northwestern, it is very active.† The second is the more recent AFT Academics, an essentially pre-majority effort, which aims to advance the interests of academic labor broadly, mainly through campus union organizing drives and

*Public universities in Florida and Oregon are also AFT affiliates with ratified contracts. Selected AFT schools are co-affiliated with NEA.
†Email dated August 14, 2019.

legislative advocacy.[23] So-called associate members – including highly-involved organizers at AFT affiliate universities – pay a modest fee of $11 per month, which helps to fund various benefits and services, including strategic guidance, organizer trainings, and access to a national network of academic labor allies. According to two student-organizers we spoke with at private AFT affiliates who serve on the organization's national steering committee, the overall aims of AFT Academics are under development.

V.A.2 UAW

As of Spring 2019, UAW has an estimated 430,000 active members (plus 540,000 retirees).* UAW was founded in 1935 as a union of auto workers; it gained more formal company recognition following the 44-day Flint sit-down strike against General Motors, one of the most significant strikes in U.S. labor history. Today though it continues to house its international headquarters in Detroit, active members work in various jobs, reflecting an ongoing labor market shift away from traditional manufacturing towards the service sector. An industrial union – meaning the union includes all workers in an industry, both "skilled" and "non-skilled"† – UAW maintains a strong membership base in production work and skilled maintenance. An estimated half of members help to produce automotive, aerospace, and heavy truck components as well as construction and agricultural equipment, for companies like Ford Motor Company, Boeing, and John Deere. UAW also has a substantial membership in service and professional jobs, including legal services, non-profit advocacy, gaming, government, health insurance, higher ed, and museums. Higher ed represents one of the union's fastest growing segments.‡

An estimated 50,000 (possibly up to 75,000) dues-paying members work in higher ed, including graduate workers, postdoctoral researchers, faculty members, and clerical, technical, and support staff.[24] UAW has relatively strong coverage in the Northeast and West. Graduate workers at the following UAW-affiliated public and private schools and school systems are protected by ratified contracts: California State University[25], The New School, New York University, University of California[26], University of Connecticut, University of Massachusetts campuses in Amherst, Boston, and Lowell, and University of Washington. An additional 12,000 to 15,000 graduate workers are organizing at Boston College, Boston University, Columbia, Harvard, and Northeastern. Organizers with Columbia and Harvard are actively bargaining their first contracts.

UAW first began organizing workers on university campuses in the 1980s and 1990s, with a campaign to unionize building maintenance and service workers at Cornell.[27,28] They won their first contract in the 1990s; today UAW Local 2300 represents 1,400 workers at Cornell and other upstate New York public-sector employers.

Graduate worker organizing by UAW began in the 1990s, with various campuses of the University of California (UC) voting throughout the mid-1990s to affiliate with UAW[29], and with the University of Washington (UW) voting in 1999.[30] The successful 1998 "card campaign" by NYU's graduate workers marked an important milestone in UAW's

*Because many UAW members work in manufacturing, an industry sensitive to changes in the economy, uaws overall membership levels tend to rise and fall with the business cycle.

†Here skilled refers to someone who has completed significant formal technical or vocational training (like an apprenticeship) in a particular trade or craft (e.g., industrial electrician).

‡Along with the gaming industry, which includes front-line casino workers, such as poker clerks and slot attendants.

first attempts to organize private graduate workers.[31] Their 2001 contract was the first ever for private university graduate workers.[32]

UAW has been at the forefront of organizing postdoctoral researchers, a segment of academic labor with high STEM concentration. They represent approximately 6,500 postdoctoral researchers in the UC system.[33] UC postdocs unionized in 2008, becoming the first postdoc union in the U.S. UC's Local 5810 represents one-tenth of all postdoctoral researchers in the U.S, which makes it the largest postdoc union. Motivated by UC's success, postdoctoral researchers at UW voted to unionize in 2018.* The union ratified its first agreement in summer 2019.[34] In spring 2018, a majority of the 2,000 Columbia postdoctoral researchers voted to unionize with UAW, becoming the first private postdoc union. They are bargaining their first contract.

V.A.3 UE

UE was first established in 1936 when a group of electrical workers from various smaller unions throughout the Northeast and Midwest met in Buffalo, NY to organize an industrial labor union that would support all workers, including skilled and non-skilled workers, across the electrical and machine tool industries.[35] Their aim was to resist more exclusionary forms of craft (i.e. occupationally-based) unionism, which limited membership to workers in skilled trades. Instead, they preferred to establish a grassroots labor organization by and for members. This "rank-and-file," or member-led, unionism emphasizes broad-based participation, democracy, and local autonomy, resisting heavy top-down leadership at both the national and local level.

As with UAW, UE's membership has both declined and diversified as the labor market has shifted away from traditional manufacturing. Historically, UE had a strong membership base at General Electric facilities, but heavy plant closures have diminished their coverage there. Today, UE represents approximately 36,000 workers distributed roughly equally across manufacturing, the public sector, and various services.† UE Locals 506 and 618, which cover locomotive plant workers in Erie, PA, recently ratified a contract with Wabtec Corporation after conducting one of the largest manufacturing worker strikes since Trump's inauguration (that distinction now belongs to UAW strike against General Motors, which kicked off in September 2019).[36]

UE's higher ed experience is more limited than the GSU's two other affiliation options. Unlike AFT and UAW, it has not pursued deliberate higher ed campaigns. Currently, it represents workers at public universities in states with especially harsh right-to-work laws, where UE covers other public sector workers (more information on this is in Appendix A). UE Local 896-COGS (The Coalition to Organize Graduate Students) at the University of Iowa, which represents approximately 2,000 workers‡, is their only graduate student local with a contract. COGS affiliated with UE in 1996, following an election loss in partnership with SEIU. According to the union's website: "The members

*Although the approximately 1,100 UW postdocs are in the same local as UW graduate employees, they are subject to a separate bargaining agreement with the university.

†Call with UE staff person, July 31, 2019.

‡As of 2018, there were approximately 7,700 graduate and professional students at the University of Iowa, according to their most recent Data Digest. As is common with graduate unions, however, a number of students are excluded from the bargaining unit, either because they arent engaged in paid work, or because they are earning their degree from a professional school. Membership is determined by the NLRB, as part of the terms of a formal election.

decided that the UE's commitment to democratic unionism and its experience representing thousands of public sector workers in the state of Iowa made it an ideal choice."[37] They also represent workers on a pre-majority basis at the University of North Carolina (UNC), North Carolina State University, along with one other southern university (which wishes to remain anonymous as their campaign is not yet public). As with Iowa, one of the justifications provided by student-organizers in North Carolina for affiliating with UE is that UE represents the state's public sector workers (as part of UE Local 150). The NC State organizer we interviewed further cited UE's "grassroots" nature, its social justice orientation, and lack of financial ties to the Democratic party.* The NC State union had the option to affiliate with SEIU–which currently supports Duke's graduate union–but only UE supports an "industrial" model that covers all academic labor (excluding tenured faculty), along with university maintenance and support staff.

Public sector workers in North Carolina (along with Virginia and South Carolina) are prohibited from collective bargaining; their wages are set by the state's legislature or local governments.† Both states have the country's lowest union density rates.[38] Iowa's public sector unions, including COGS, can negotiate around wages only.

*Interview with NC State graduate organizer, 5/7/2019.

†This policy dates to a 1959 law.

V.B Resources & Strategy

This section describes the resources and the general campaign strategy each of our three union affiliation options would provide were we to affiliate with them. It is important to keep in mind that the increasingly punitive climate for unions in the U.S. has created precarious and less predictable organizing conditions. This requires us to be flexible. Further, it means that guarantees of resources are more difficult to secure. Much of this work is context-dependent; thus, our affiliation partners are unable to make promises or issue guarantees. *Importantly, all three options have said they are willing to partner with us, have provided an approximate sense of the resources they would supply, and informally committed not to withdraw support should our campaign face substantial challenges.*

Through the various phases of a unionization campaign, national affiliation partners provide support mainly by deploying professional paid organizers and training student-workers. Broadly, a traditional unionization campaign falls into three phases: organizing before a union vote, bargaining for a contract, and contract enforcement. The resources supplied by a national union differ between these phases and often across locals working with the same affiliate.

In the pre-election organizing phase (the phase we currently occupy), the primary goal of the union is to contact every student-worker and recruit 5-10% of them to be active organizers in the union. An affiliation partner in this phase will often supply paid organizers (either staff from the national itself, or else they will pay a small number of student-workers) to help develop and deploy a recruitment strategy. Additionally, the national will conduct organizer trainings for members of the organizing committee, so that student-workers can effectively generate community support for the union, and become knowledgeable about workplace issues.

The strategy during the pre-contract phase differs across potential affiliation partners. All three options emphasize maximizing in-person, one-on-one conversations about the union and fostering a large, engaged group of student-organizers. In addition to on-the-ground organizing, some unions focus on issue campaigns, which are campaigns to improve specific student-worker conditions before a contract is won. Examples include a campaign for expanded mental health services, for gender neutral bathrooms, or for more on-campus housing. Based on our research, our potential affiliation partners differ on their preference for issue campaigns, as described in greater detail below.

In the organizing phase before a card campaign, an affiliation partner will commonly supply dedicated staff members. They may be full- or part-time, depending on the affiliation partner, but this is not consistent even within a single national union. Over the course of a card campaign, and then leading up to an election, more staff are directed to the local union.

After a successful election, the union begins preparing for the contract negotiation process by determining and prioritizing goals. During this phase, the national union will commonly supply staff with expertise in contract negotiations. Depending on the national union and bargaining conditions, this staff either takes an active role in negotiations, leading or participating alongside student-organizers, or a supporting role, providing advice and insights based on experience. Additionally, national staff may help with actions student-workers undertake to fight for a strong contract, like rallies or strikes.

Finally, after a contract has been won, the union ensures that the university upholds its end of the contract. In this

enforcement phase, an affiliation partner helps train "shop stewards." These are student-workers who are trained to understand the contract, and act as the initial point through which most student-workers will start a grievance procedure if a contract violation is found. An affiliation partner will help initial shop stewards in navigating the grievance procedure agreed upon in the contract until they are comfortable and adequately trained to do so themselves. When grievances cannot be resolved within the procedure negotiated in the contract, an affiliation partner can supply legal support on behalf of student-workers so that the contract is upheld. In the enforcement phase, the level of national staff support generally decreases to having dedicated staff members who may be full- or part-time dedicated to the local union.

Additionally, in the bargaining and enforcement phases, the union must still be continuously organizing. Below we will discuss our best understanding for the resources supplied by our choices for affiliation partners in these phases.

During critical phases of the campaign, such as during an election or during bargaining, an affiliation partner can also apply pressure on the university in other ways. This includes having local politicians issue statements of support for the union or hiring a public relations firm to promote the union's goals and message.

V.B.1 AFT

The strategy of AFT, as communicated to us by AFT staff, is to push towards an election while pursuing issue campaigns. Much like UAW, the push for the election is done through having face-to-face conversations with student-workers and recruiting organizers. At the same time as this election push, as a way of publicizing the union and winning early improvements of working conditions, AFT campaigns are also encouraged to run issue campaigns, which are public campaigns to push the administration for demands on a specific issue.

A core component of AFT affiliation is enrollment by a certain number of highly-involved student organizers in AFT Academics, AFT's relatively young national academic labor initiative.[23] This was confirmed by national AFT staff organizers during the information session we hosted, and during phone calls with student-organizers at multiple AFT affiliates. In exchange for monthly dues payments of $11, participating unions are assured various resources, including organizer trainings and strategic guidance from national staff persons. This is an essentially pre-majority model. However, AFT Academic members are not full AFT members, meaning they are ineligible to send delegates to the convention or vote on issues raised there. AFT Academic membership ceases once participants ratify contracts.

Support from AFT at other schools has been tied to enrollment in AFT Academics. Experiences have varied. Northwestern and Princeton are both involved with AFT Academics, and seem relatively satisfied with their level of support (organizers from each union also have representation on the AFT Academics national steering committee). AFT staff involvement ebbs and flows depending on need; they also pay highly-involved student workers. Like others, Princeton and Northwestern began organizing in 2016. Princeton has not yet had an election, but is considering a third-party-supervised strategy.* Up to four staff organizers were engaged during earlier intense phases. According to the Princeton organizer we spoke with, recent contact with AFT has been more limited (and the staff person they are assigned can be hard to reach). Northwestern currently has two full-time staffers dedicated to their campaign.†

*Interview with Princeton University graduate organizer, 4/3/19.

†Interview with Northwestern University graduate organizer, 3/14/19.

They had more around a couple years ago when they thought they would hold an election. AFT also paid the student organizer we spoke with.

At this point, both Princeton and Northwestern seem to have relatively strong core student-worker leadership, which obviates the need for high, ongoing AFT involvement.

The experience at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) was less positive. Student organizers recounted an unfortunate experience, in which AFT staff organizers, with whom they had relatively close, trusting working relationships, told them that the union would retract its campaign support, unless they enrolled a certain number of student organizers in AFT Academics. Penn organizers were unwilling to comply; in response, AFT allegedly pulled out of the campaign and revoked access to organizing data collected by the student-workers. When asked about this, a national AFT staff organizer who worked with Penn denied that there was ever an ultimatum or that they revoked data access.

Currently Brown's graduate union is negotiating its first contract. They are an AFT affiliate. Apparently, student-organizers there were not presented with a similar ultimatum, and they continue to receive support.

AFT says that it prides itself on the autonomy they give to their graduate locals in their day-to-day operations, but students' reported experiences varied widely. For example, at Brown, the amount of autonomy provided to the organizing committee depended on which AFT staff member was assigned to their campaign. According to our conversations, their first national representative was very hands-off to the point of seeming disinterested in the union's progress; their second campaign director, however, seemed threatened by the rank-and-file membership and reportedly took on a more controlling leadership style.* For instance, AFT was apparently involved in the selection of the student-worker bargaining team.

Student-organizers at longer established AFT-affiliated locals at University of Michigan (UMich) and University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC) rely primarily on student-organizers. Both UMich and UIC organizers we spoke with cited frustration with AFT staff organizers, concerning proper dues collection and weak bargaining with university administration, and prefer to manage their work on their own as a result.

There have been reports of process breakdowns among AFT campaigns as well, such as in advance of the failed election at Cornell University.[39] This was reported to us through a student-organizer at NYU, who reportedly has connections to Cornell student-organizers.

In contrast to UAW, there are many fewer nearby universities affiliated with AFT, with Brown being the closest AFT affiliate. Despite this, other unions outside of higher education, such as AFT affiliate, the Boston Teachers Union, could also reportedly offer solidarity on actions if we work to foster these relationships.

V.B.2 UAW

Strategically, UAW-led campaigns generally focus on organizing towards a formal election. This means emphasizing face-to-face conversations and increasing the number of active organizers, and deemphasizing pre-election issue campaigns. While none of the recent UAW campaigns featured deliberate issue campaigns as far as we know, union

*Interview with Brown University graduate organizer, 4/30/19.

officials report being open to them if MIT union members so choose, according to conversations. Leading up to the Harvard union election in April 2018, the campaign capitalized on widespread student anger over revelations that political science professor, Jorge Dominguez, had ascended the departmental ranks in spite of decades of allegations of sexual misconduct by faculty and students.[40] However, one Harvard graduate organizer and bargaining committee member we recently spoke with disputed this claim, and said that UAW might be more resistant to issue-campaign organizing than previously reported.* Specifically, this student-organizer cited lack of support from UAW staff for pursuing issue campaigns or any work that they perceived as not working immediately towards an election or contract.

In terms of resources, for campaigns at Boston College and Boston University, UAW provided each with a half-time organizer, as a baseline; Harvard was assigned a full-time organizer. Generally, as campaigns have run into pushback from the administration and hence lost momentum, the support from UAW has decreased. There was a period of time in which there was no staff organizer actively supporting the Boston College unionization campaign. As the April 2018 election approached, the staff support increased significantly at Harvard with many staff from the local area being pulled in to help with the final push. According to student-organizers we spoke with at Harvard, ratifying a contract there appears to be a top priority for UAW's regional leadership (Harvard is in Region 9A). This has resulted in resources being moved to Harvard from other locals, including BC.

During the bargaining stage at Columbia, there were at least 5 UAW staff employed in some capacity with bargaining. At Harvard in addition to the staff sent from the national, UAW employed multiple recently graduated student-workers as organizers. At Harvard, bargaining was done by student-workers advised by UAW staff. At Columbia, there were discussions between UAW regional director (currently Beverley Brakeman for UAW Region 9A) and the university administration about the terms of bargaining, of which student-workers at the time were not aware. At least one school affiliate with UAW, UMass Amherst, has chosen to have no staff from national UAW work on the campaign and has used local funds to pay for organizers (we touch on these two issues in greater depth in Section V.C.2.)

UAW has committed to providing the MIT GSU with a dedicated staff organizer to help plan and execute our campaign, map our workplace, and train student-organizers. This particular organizer also provides support to other Boston area higher ed campaigns, and fills gaps in campaigns in other sectors when the need is urgent (e.g., leading up to a UAW election at a Volkswagen plant in Tennessee). UAW staff organizers are assigned to units by the union's elected regional director, Beverley Brakeman, according to "where they are most needed."† Friction between student organizers and UAW staff, should it arise, is mediated by the regional director.

UAW regional organizations also have education representatives who lead various worker trainings, including "stewards" training (e.g. understanding the contract, identifying and facilitating the resolution of grievances, etc.), and know-your-rights training.

UAW also supports unions by engaging with local politicians to exert pressure on employers. For example, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), as well as Representative Joe Kennedy (D-MA) and former representative Mike Capuano

*Meeting with Harvard graduate organizer, September 2019.
†Info session, 01/12/19.

(D-MA), publicly supported the Harvard graduate worker unionization effort. Most recently, Senator Warren has shown her support for BC's unionization campaign, through a series of tweets and a video in which she criticizes the administration for refusing to bargain with the union, in spite of a successful election.[41]

Additionally, UAW maintains a fund to provide partial wage replacement for members who strike (currently, UAW-GM workers are receiving approximately $250 per week from it). During the 2014 Constitutional Convention, members voted to raise membership dues temporarily from 1.15 percent of gross monthly wages to 1.44 percent, to help replenish the fund. When the fund reaches $850 million, dues will return to prior levels. As of November 30, 2018, this fund held roughly $600 million.

V.B.3 UE

Of our three national unions in consideration, UE places the most strategic emphasis on issue campaigns, which are public campaigns to push the administration for demands on a specific workplace issue. In a series of conversations with outgoing UE president Peter Knowlton, he emphasized the difficulties associated with the national political environment for unions and the high turnover of graduate students and proposed issue campaigns as a way of addressing these challenges. Instead of focusing explicitly and at the campaign's outset on a formal election, under the UE model, the union would focus primarily on winning improvements through issue campaigns and also increasing the participation in, and the power of, the union through those same campaigns. Face-to-face organizing is a central part of this strategy. An election would become the target only once it became clear through our organizing that the union was approaching the required amount of support to win and to secure voluntary recognition from the MIT administration. The reported advantage of this would be that the campaign would not lose momentum in the face of roadblocks, like student turnover, an altered national political environment, an extended pre-election campaign, and/or intense university pushback post-election. This form of organizing is referred to as the pre-majority organizing model.

In terms of in-person support, North Carolina State and University of North Carolina share a UE organizer with the rest of the UE locals/units in the state, higher-ed and non. The NC State organizer we interviewed reported being very satisfied with the level of support provided by UE.* The organizer has "just been there" for them. He's not overly hands-on, which they prefer; but he's present enough that they lean on him when necessary. He reportedly gives a lot of "on-the-ground help," and conducts organizer trainings. On the other hand, two UNC graduate student organizers we spoke with through email are less satisfied with the support they receive from the UE organizer, whom they characterize as overworked, and not very helpful with organizing their chapter (see Section V.C.3 for additional information on the UNC chapter).† The Iowa graduate organizer we interviewed reported having access to any resources they want, including officials of the national organization. Currently there is one dedicated staff who is on campus once a week and available by phone or email on the other days. Additionally, Iowa has hired student-organizers part-time from their local funds. Staff support is offered during key times in a campaign. For instance, up to 5 organizers in total helped the union conduct a re-certification election.‡

*Interview with NC State graduate organizer, 5/7/2019.
†Email communication with UNC graduate organizer, 9/25/2019.
‡Interview with University of Iowa graduate organizer, 5/1/2019.

According to conversations with the union's leadership, the degree of in-person support from UE would increase gradually over the life of our campaign. In the immediate term, UE has committed to providing a) remote strategic campaign support and progress assessments and b) connections to skills training. This could perhaps include periodic meetings with an appointed organizer, whenever his schedule allows, and with the former union president, now retired, who lives in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Sometime in February or March 2020, UE could provide additional ground organizing capacity in support of a card campaign, should that timeline for going public work for the MIT GSU. UE would have the capacity to provide the MIT union with a dedicated organizer starting in April 2020. In order to fund these in-person supports, UE leadership would expect a certain number of highly-involved student-organizers to pay partial membership dues, worth an estimated 1.4 to 1.5 percent of monthly gross wages. The participation level would need to be relatively substantial, as well as increase between the two stages of in-person support.

Of the small number of schools affiliated with UE, only Iowa has won an election and a contract. But we view this less as a failure of UE's organizing than as a consequence of harsh state labor laws. As of 2017, Iowa public sector workers can only collectively bargain over wages. The other UE schools are in states that deprive public sector workers of the right to collectively bargain at all. This means that most union work involves fostering a strong student-worker base and pursuing incremental, targeted workplace change through issue campaigns.

V.C Structure & Governance

Another important aspect of affiliation is the organizational structure of the larger union we choose, and how we would fit into and interact with that structure. This section will explore these variations for AFT, UAW, and UE. A key issue for our union concerns the level of autonomy and decision-making authority we would have with respect to our own governance structures and values, and as a member of these broader structures.

In general, labor unions have three major organizational tiers: local, regional, and national. Individual workplaces (e.g., a manufacturing plant or a university) are called bargaining units. If a bargaining unit is large enough, it will commonly make up its own local; or else multiple smaller units will make up a single "amalgamated" local. Locals commonly bargain contracts with the employer, help field grievances, and handle other day-to-day issues that affect members.

Together these locals make up a union's larger geographic regions. A union's local and regional entities then make up the national (or international) organization. The national organization commonly serves as the site of union-wide strategy-setting and decision-making, with different departments devoted to particular strategic and administrative goals (e.g., organizing or research); regional entities occupy an intermediate role. A union's membership commonly elects officers for all three levels of the organization. Elections for regional and national officers commonly occur at larger union gatherings, at both the regional and national level, like joint councils or conventions.

Such processes occur within the confines of the union by-laws and constitution, both of which are subject to periodic amendments by membership. Union by-laws provide guidance to locals on internal, organizational processes (e.g., electing officers). Typically, by-laws must comply with a larger national union constitution. A constitution expresses the union's core values and vision for society. Certain unions permit locals to establish their own constitutions (assuming it complies with the national constitution), while others assign this function exclusively to the national body.

Another important aspect of union structure is the dues process. Dues are collected from individual members at the local level and distributed from there; for most unions, dues are funneled to the national level (where they might support strike funds, political campaigns, and other union-wide efforts) and then redistributed to regional and local entities. As previously mentioned, the payment of dues is a crucial way to build power and solidarity between union members through the pooling and collective deployment of resources. Because dues are so central to the livelihood and efficacy of a union, it is important to consider each union's particular implementation of dues collection and distribution.

V.C.1 AFT

If MIT-GSU chooses to affiliate with AFT, we would become our own local. This is standard practice across the union. This means we would be free to establish our own governance structures, including our own local constitution (as long as both comply with the national constitution).

Whereas UAW and UE locals are aggregated into larger regional entities, AFT's roughly 3,000 locals are organized into statewide federations. We would become members of AFT-MA; according to staff we spoke with, if MIT GSU

were to affiliate with AFT, our union would be the second largest local in Massachusetts. This would give us a seat on the state federation's, but only once we ratified our first contract. AFT-MA currently has 27 locals representing 25,000 members; if we join, we would add a new local of an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 people and represent a large proportion of the state's members.

AFT National is governed by its elected officers and by delegates to the union's biennial convention (the next is in 2020), where decisions are made collectively about national union governance, strategy, and political activity. Elected leaders are President Randi Weingarten (since 2008), a Secretary-Treasurer, and Executive Vice President, along with a 42-member executive council.[42] Each local can send one elected delegate to the convention, with one additional delegate for each additional 100 members. AFT structures their national work around a series of committees, dedicated to both organizational or governance-related work (e.g., Executive Committee, Constitutional Amendments and Convention Committee), and issue-based work (e.g., Committee on Civil and Human Rights, and Women's Rights Committee).

Once recognized, AFT National and AFT-MA would help us establish our by-laws and constitution. We would be responsible for establishing our own grievance procedure (that is, a procedure for helping to resolve workplace issues) although we could request guidance from an AFT-MA staff member.

Official membership dues payment would begin once our union ratifies a contract. Associate membership dues in support of AFT Academics would cease. AFT locals are free to establish dues levels beyond those set by the union's national and state entities (in this case, by AFT-MA). These funds would be set aside for our own internal uses. We estimate that dues would be worth approximately 1.5 percent of monthly gross wages. This is based on multiple conversations with national staff, who pushed back on our attempts to report a specific figure (in part because the figure varies by state and local, with further locally-set earnings-based adjustments). Our union local would elect a treasurer to manage funds.

V.C.2 UAW

The decision of whether or not the MIT GSU would be its own UAW local is not yet settled. It would happen later in our campaign. There is also the option to join an existing, amalgamated local (e.g., the union locals that include UMass Amherst and UMass Boston), or to form one with colleagues at area UAW-affiliated private universities (e.g., Harvard, Boston College, or Northeastern). The decision would reportedly account for student input, as well as internal needs of the region and national. Ultimately, it is up to the director of the union region in which we are located (Region 9A). Most recently, the Region 9A director decided to fold the New School's graduate union, SENS-UAW (they are one of just five private institutions with ratified contracts), into amalgamated Local 7902, even though the graduate unions of neighboring NYU and Columbia are both members of amalgamated Local 2110. Thus, these decisions are based on various factors, only some of which we understand.

A conversation with a student organizer at NYU's graduate union, which is a member of amalgamated Local 2110, cautioned us about the challenges of membership in a larger UAW local. She called it a "constant fight" to secure

resources and funds from the local leadership.* Further, there was a relatively prolonged struggle over eligibility of members from NYU's union for elected seats on the local's governing body, the joint council.[43] The joint council is an important forum in amalgamated UAW locals for communication and decision-making. Each unit in a larger local is entitled to at least two representatives. These challenges may be unique to this particular local – and exacerbated by the fact that the local's president has held office for more than three decades – but are nonetheless important for us to consider as we make this decision.

The potential for these types of challenges was echoed in a conversation with a student organizer with UMass Amherst's longer-established graduate union. The organizer we spoke with takes deliberate steps to avoid interaction with the union's regional or national entities. The two organizations reportedly leave each other alone. During their last set of contract negotiations, which were apparently very successful, they had no UAW participation at all.†

UAW's roughly 600 locals are organized into nine geographic regions. Were the GSU to affiliate with UAW, our union would become part of Region 9A, which includes eastern New York (including the New York City metropolitan area and parts of the Upstate region), Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and Puerto Rico.[44] Each region is governed by an elected regional and sub-regional director.

The national operations of UAW are governed by an elected 14-person Executive Board, consisting of the President, Secretary-Treasurer, the Vice Presidents associated with each of the three U.S. automakers, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, and Fiat Chrysler, along with the nine regional directors.[45] The national organization contains multiple departments, structured around different union work.[46] There are several national collective bargaining departments that coordinate bargaining and administer national agreements. Examples are General Motors; Aerospace; and Technical, Office and Professional (the interests of UAW higher ed membership are accounted for here). Others feed into the President's office (e.g., Legislative and Research), or into the office of the Secretary-Treasurer (e.g., Accounting and Strike assistance). Finally, an "other" category includes an organizing department, which develops the national union's overall organizing strategy in sectors like higher ed.

Of the three unions, UAW sets out the greatest number of structural requirements of their locals. This unfolds in various ways. (Again, to the extent it affects our union depends in part on whether we would be our own local, or a bargaining unit in a larger amalgamated local, which is unclear.) By and large, union governance is determined by locally-set by-laws, in coordination with provisions of a relatively lengthy national constitution.[47] Compared with UAW's 212 pages, the most recent national constitution of AFT, a much larger union, is 35 pages (UE's is 22 pages).‡[48] Unlike AFT and UE, UAW locals do not have their own individual constitutions. Per the constitution, each local is required to have a certain mix of executive officers. Articles 36 and 37 set out additional requirements for "subordinate bodies." Article 44 requires locals to establish 10 standing committees (e.g., a women's committee and a civil and human rights committee).§

The national constitution is subject to amendments by a majority vote of delegates to the Constitutional Convention, which is held every four years (the next is in 2022), or at Special Conventions. The number of convention delegates

*Interview with NYU graduate organizer, 3/26/19.
†Interview with UMass Amherst graduate organizer, 4/5/19.
‡The UE constitution is available from MIT GSU offline upon request.
§The full list of committees is found here.

to which each local (or amalgamated local) is entitled varies by local size.* Were we to join an amalgamated local, because of our large size, our union would be allowed to elect our own convention delegate. Similarly, the number of votes to which each delegate is entitled varies by local size. This means that convention delegates potentially have multiple votes, up to eight. Were we to join an amalgamated local, the way votes are apportioned among delegates would be decided by the local (again, with no delegate holding more than eight votes).†

The opportunity to influence the national constitution thus is an important role of union locals and individual bargaining units. This may not represent the consensus view among UAW higher ed affiliates, but the same student organizer from UMass Amherst called the 2018 convention "horrible, shitty"; she reported uncontested elections, and violations of election rules by Executive Board members (which members of the local would never violate, according to her).

Affiliation Committee members have concerns about the breadth and depth of UAW's national framework, along with other longer-established organizational norms, to the extent they limit our decision-making on key dimensions, including our strategy and our political voice in both UAW and broader domains. Selected student organizers at Columbia, NYU, and UC Berkeley each report instances of UAW overreach and/or concessionary bargaining strategies. For example, shortly after the Columbia administration agreed to recognize the graduate union and begin bargaining, union members learned that the Region 9A director had been in secret communication for at least a couple weeks with the administration to negotiate a bargaining framework.[49] When we asked UAW representatives about this, they offered defenses which indicate no malicious intent on their part; they claim that it was a strategic decision important to the campaign's progress.

As another example, UC Berkeley graduate workers democratically chose to take a political stance which was then overruled by the national. According to UAW officials, the Berkeley union failed to comply with the decision-making process defined in the constitution.

In response to concerns about UAW acting undemocratically, student organizers at a small number of UAW-affiliated universities–UC Berkeley, Columbia, and NYU–have formed chapters of an organization called Academic Workers for a Democratic Union (AWDU). The platforms of each chapter vary; but, in general, the group's purpose is to build rank-and-file power. According to a member from the relatively small Columbia chapter (10-15 people in core caucus, with more seemingly on board with their goals), their goal is to dismantle the power hierarchy they see between UAW leadership and the broader membership, and to establish institutional measures that hold leaders accountable. They also aim to bargain over larger social and political issues, in addition to standard workplace issues.[50] An NYU

*From Section 5 of Article 8: Each Local Union shall have one (1) delegate for two hundred (200) members or less and one (1) additional delegate for the next three hundred (300) members or major fraction thereof, and one (1) additional delegate for each additional eight hundred (800) members or major fraction thereof, except Amalgamated Local Unions which elect as many delegates as they have units who average two hundred (200) dues-paying members or more, and that those units who have two hundred (200) members or more may elect their own delegates to the Convention and those with less than two hundred (200) shall be grouped together and vote as a miscellaneous group.

†From Section 7 of Article 8: Each Local Union shall have one (1) vote for the first one hundred (100) members or less and one (1) additional vote for each additional one hundred (100) members or major fraction thereof, but no delegate shall have more than eight (8) votes. The votes shall be equally apportioned among the elected delegates of each Local Union, except that an Amalgamated Local Union may apportion its votes in such manner as the Local Union decides with no delegate having more than eight (8) votes. The total number of votes of the units of an Amalgamated Local Union shall not exceed the total votes which the Local Union is entitled to under Section 9 of this Article of the Constitution.

organizer we spoke with echoed these aims.

The group has its detractors. Other Columbia student organizers we spoke with feel that the group has slowed the campaign's progress by focusing too much on ideas for a perfectly democratic union, and detracting from core organizing work. According to them, this may have driven UAW to move resources away from Columbia's campaign because they weren't seeing results. Like the UAW officials we spoke with, they argue that the fact that UAW leadership allows AWDU to have a voice in how the campaign should be run is indicative of the fact that UAW is a democratic organization that is willing to consider diverse viewpoints.

Of the three national unions the MIT graduate union is considering, the dues structure of UAW is the most straightforward. UAW members pay a constitutionally-set 1.44% of monthly gross wages (this was raised from 1.15% in 2014). Dues are not paid until the first employment contract has been successfully negotiated with the university. As with AFT and UE locals, UAW locals can opt to raise dues for internal uses. For example, the UMass Lowell Graduate Employee Organization collects 2.0% of wages, of which 0.56% funds local operations. The distribution of dues is constitutionally set: 38% are directed to the local; 32% to the national organization's general fund; 30% to the national strike fund.*

V.C.3 UE

According to UE officials we spoke with, the MIT GSU would be our own local. As well, it is estimated that we would be the third largest local in UE once we ratify a contract (the largest UE local is currently the North Carolina state-wide amalgamated local, Local 150, which consists of about 3,100 workers, including graduate workers).

UE emphasizes local autonomy and democracy. Practically speaking, this means we would have control over the development and execution of our organizing campaign, over the local resources we collect, and over the use of our political voice. They would provide support as needed during contract bargaining. This is consistent with their rank-and-file, or member-led, model of unionism.

Student-workers we contacted from two of the three public UE affiliates have reported that this has been true in practice, with them feeling as if they can make decisions, and execute their work, independent of the larger entities to which they are tied. According to an NC State graduate organizer, the school's union interacts with the state-wide local only, and they report no issues with this relationship. The former president of Iowa's union, COGS Local 896, reported that UE would provide the best opportunity for a member-led union, and that member democracy is present locally and nationally. She recounted a positive experience in which national intervention supported them through a rocky transition in local leadership, and removed an overly hands-on staff organizer.

The UNC graduate organizers we spoke with, however, report having a relatively "fraught relationship" with the North Carolina state-wide UE local (Local 150). They report internal divisions within the UNC chapter over the quality of their relationship with the larger local. According to them, one could talk to others in the chapter "who are very loyal to the statewide and hear very positive things." One UNC organizer cited "poor communication" between the chapter and the local, and also between the local and the national, as well as instances of racism and racial

*UAW Constitution, Article 16, Section 5.

tension within the local and chapter. The state-wide local reportedly "very clearly took a side in our internal chapter issues because they only ever heard from two people who (in some ways) were gatekeepers in their relationship to statewide." In turn, the national understood the UNC chapter's issues from the perspective of the state-wide local.

In one instance of "gatekeeping," the chapter president strongly opposed an unauthorized chapter strike over the threatened reinstallation of a Confederate statue by the university; the state-wide local leadership took the president's side without ever attempting to hear from the broader chapter membership. In another case, the UNC chapter's People of Color Caucus asked their chapter stewards, who were white, to boycott a meeting called by UNC deans to discuss the Confederate statue. When the stewards attended the meeting anyway, chapter members ousted the stewards from their positions, a move that the local deemed unconstitutional. As a result, the local then temporarily dissolved the UNC chapter. Finally, in another instance, an organizer, whom the local contracted with–technically, she was employed by another community organization–was subject to racist and misogynistic comments in a meeting with the state-wide local leadership. She, herself a woman of color, was "unceremoniously fired." She had requested the meeting to discuss issues with the racism in her home organization. While the UNC organizer we spoke with emphasized that these cases are not representative of the chapter or the local as whole–and may be unique to their local–they felt that there was poor oversight by the national UE leadership. Again, this poor oversight was attributed to poor communication in which the perspectives of a few local leaders were the only ones transmitted to the higher levels of UE.

The Affiliation Committee is troubled by this account. In our assessment, it seems that all of these cases stem partly from a complicated internal dynamic between the chapter and the local, and from unique conditions of the state-wide local. In our case, we would be our own local and thus expect that we would not experience these challenges. This account emphasizes the importance of clear and broadly accessible communication channels between the local and national organizations; a lack of them can lead to poor oversight and intervention in times of crisis. An additional source of UNC's problems was racism and class-based tensions that existed within the local and the chapter. The MIT graduate union must strive to be an anti-racist organization, and must implement structures that prevent and address racist behaviors, within our union and across MIT.

As far as structural requirements, UE's constitution does not mandate specific local officer positions. According to a former President of COGS-Local 896 and current UE staff person, locals "can mostly do what [they] want" with regards to choosing a local officer structure, though most locals will have a president, vice president, chief steward, and various departmental stewards.* Democratic structures that the national organization encourages, or in some instances requires, include regular membership meetings, elected steward network, democratic engagement in determining bargaining goals, no closed-door bargaining sessions or "information blackouts" during negotiations, and only sending elected rank-and-file delegates to the national convention.

UE is in the process of transitioning from three to two geographical regions: from Northeast, Eastern, and Western to Eastern and Western. We are located in what is now the Northeast Region, which includes New England and eastern New York, excluding New York City. The Northeast Region consists of roughly 3,300 workers. These workers are employed predominantly in manufacturing jobs, but the region also includes University of Vermont service work-

*Interview with UE staff person, 7/31/2019.

ers, food co-op workers, nursing home employees, and Logan Airport Hertz employees. The seat of the Northeast Regional Council is located in New Bedford, MA.

The Regional Councils are important decision-making forums for UE locals. They meet at least two times a year. The Regional Council executive board is elected by the locals in the region and is made up of a general vice president, a regional secretary, and an allotted number of rank-and-file delegates-at-large from that region. The number of votes counted for our local would be one-half of the number of dues-paying members, due to our part-time status (see passage on dues below for details).

UE has three elected national officers: the general president, the general secretary-treasurer, and the director of organization. The director of organization oversees UE's full-time national organizing staff. These individuals are reportedly responsible for developing and executing the union's national organizing priorities. Consistent with a rank-and-file model of unionism, which aims to avoid a "top-down, top-heavy, bureaucratic style" of unionism, the salary of these national officers is capped at the highest-paid wage in the industry (currently set at $51,000).[51] Further, unlike other traditional unions such as AFT and UAW, which feature a mix of elected and appointed leadership nationally and locally – both the UAW and AFT constitutions feature language regarding "appointments" in multiple places – UE prohibits appointments. Instead all officers are elected. This is intended to reduce favoritism and political brokering.

UE's three national officers are *ex-officio* members of the UE general executive board, along with three regional financial secretaries and elected at-large rank-and-file delegates designated by the geographical regions. The number of delegates that a region elects to the general executive board is between one and four and is commensurate with the region's membership.*

According to new rules as of September 1st, 2019, newly organized workplaces will pay dues of 2.5 hours per month, or 1.25 hours per month, up to a cap of $21 per month for the national, for workers working 20 hours per week or fewer. As graduate workers at MIT, our official hours are limited to 20 hours per week so we would be considered part-time. When calculated in the context of our yearly stipend, the rate is comparable to that of UAW or AFT (roughly 1.5 percent of monthly gross wages). We each would pay the capped amount of $21 per month to the national organization. This results in a divide of 54% of dues to the local and 46% of dues to the national if we are paying our minimum dues. It is important to note that we would collect the dues locally first, and cut a check to the national organization, as opposed to the national collecting dues and cutting a check to the local.

Further, each local must pay a one-time $50 charter fee to the Regional Council.

*From Article 10, Section A of the UE Constitution: "Regions with 2,500 or more full per capitas paid to the national union shall be entitled to elect one (1) rank-and-file delegate-at-large. Regions with 3,500 or more full per capitas paid to the national union shall be entitled to elect two (2) rank-and-file delegates-at-large. Regions with 4,500 or more full per capitas paid to the national union shall be entitled to elect three (3) rank-and-file delegates at large. Regions with 5,500 or more full per capitas paid to the national union shall be entitled to elect four (4) rank-and-file delegates-at-large. No region shall be eligible to elect more than four (4) rank-and-file delegates-at-large."

V.D Policy Positions & Politics

Unions are political actors that, in some cases, invest significant resources to influence national and local legislative agendas and public opinion in ways that broadly benefit their memberships. This section aims to provide a sense of each union's engagement in party politics, and their stance on key social and economic issues of concern to MIT GSU members.

V.D.1 AFT

On the Issues. AFT policy positions are expressed through resolutions passed at the biennial national convention or by the AFT executive council.

Education. As a teachers union, AFT has a particular focus on education issues. AFT condemns Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and her "school choice" agenda.[52] They call for the regulation of for-profit college and for a moratorium on charter schools.[53]

Healthcare. AFT opposes repealing the Affordable Care Act and supports universal healthcare coverage.[54] However, AFT President Randi Weingarten has equivocated over this issue recently, writing an article in Politico on September 23 titled "The False Choice Over Medicare for All."[55]

Immigration. AFT has strongly condemned the Trump administration's policy of family separation, calling it a "crime against humanity", mentioning it together with other historical atrocities involving forced separation and imprisonment like the Holocaust and the internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII. They have called for full repeal of the administration's "zero tolerance" immigration policy and support legislation in Congress to stop this policy. They also pressed a human rights complaint with the United Nations Human Rights Council calling on them to condemn the administration's immigration policy.[56]

AFT advocates on behalf of those facing deportation as a result of the reversal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), as well as those who are undocumented or have Temporary Protected Status. They oppose the practice of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents raiding public schools and support sanctuary schools and campuses.[57,58]

Foreign Policy. AFT has condemned the United States' "Forever Wars" in the "war on terror", which they believe are motivated by the interests of US corporations and the ruling elite, and undermine public services by diverting investment from education, healthcare, etc. towards war-making. They condemn "imperialist wars", which are motivated by racism and seeking access to resources, markets, and territory, such as the genocide of the indigenous population of North America, and wars and interventions throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Indochina, and elsewhere.[59]

AFT has criticized U.S. belligerence on the Korean Peninsula, including the proposed installation of a missile defense system which AFT views as a "first-strike" system, and calls for the U.S. to facilitate peace negotiations between North and South Korea.[60] They have criticized the Chinese government's recent actions against protestors in Hong Kong and stand "in solidarity with democracy defenders in Hong Kong and in support of the values of equality, dignity, democracy and justice." AFT has also strongly condemned the recent U.S. intervention in Venezuela;[61] the president of Brazil Jair Bolsonaro and the imprisonment of opposition leader Lula Ignacio da Silva;[62] and the role of U.S. ally Saudi Arabia in the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.[63]

Environment. AFT has not endorsed the Green New Deal, nor have they taken a stance on environmental resolutions that we know of.

Relationship with U.S. Political Organizations. AFT endorsed Hillary Clinton in the 2008 and 2016 Presidential elections. Clinton and AFT President Randi Weingarten have a long-standing relationship dating back to when Clinton was a U.S. Senator from New York and Weingarten led New York's United Federation of Teachers. Weingarten sits on the board of the pro-Democratic Party super-PAC Priorities USA Action, which was the primary super-PAC supporting Clinton's 2016 candidacy. In 2016, AFT donated $2.5 million.

In 2018, AFT spent $1.88 million in political lobbying, on issues such as education, healthcare, immigration, and labor/workplace.[64] AFT spent $17.9 million on its political action committee AFT Solidarity, $4 million for the For Our Future PAC*[65], $2 million for the Senate Majority PAC, and $1.5 million for the House Majority PAC. AFT spent $2.1 million in contributions to 180 Democratic congressional candidates and $6,000 to two Republican candidates.

AFT is a member of the AFL-CIO, the national federation of U.S. labor unions. Almost all U.S. unions are members; notable non-members include SEIU and UE.

V.D.2 UAW

On the Issues. Through its non-partisan Community Action Program (CAP), UAW provides a regional venue for members to exercise their political voice. CAPs engage in public education, voter registration, lobbying, and endorsements on behalf of member interests. The CAP program works closely with the national union's Legislative Affairs Department, which works to advance UAW's federal agenda, on such issues as: "the right to organize, worker safety, health care, protecting Social Security and Medicare, trade, immigration, tax fairness, energy policy, and all aspects of the federal budget". Details on selected issues follow.

Trade. UAW strongly opposed the Fast Track Authority passed by Congress in 2015, which denies Congress the ability to amend or filibuster international trade agreements. The fast tracking of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) served as an example, which UAW believes had detrimental effects on workers.

*For Our Future is a PAC launched in 2016 by AFT along with AFL-CIO, AFSCME, NEA, and billionaire Tom Steyer's group NextGen Climate in order to "mobilize working families" in battleground states to elect Democrats to office.

UAW participated in negotiations over the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a priority for the Obama administration, because of its potential impact on the automotive industry. UAW was partially successful in its fight to preserve protective tariffs on cars and parts. Nevertheless, UAW opposed the deal, which they claimed would have led to further loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs due to the participation of nations with weak labor protections.

Although UAW agreed with the Obama administration in "practically every other major policy area", international trade was one area where they disagreed. Conversely, though opposing President Trump on most issues, UAW is supportive of the Trump administration's position on international trade agreements, commending the decision to pull out of TPP negotiations.

President Trump. UAW has been highly critical of President Donald Trump and his administration's aggressive efforts to cut regulations on business, which they claim benefit their members. They are critical of Trump's cabinet, calling it "one of the most anti-worker and reactionary administrations since World War II".

Health Care. UAW strongly supported efforts to pass the Affordable Care Act in 2010, and oppose the Republican Party's recent repeal efforts. The CAP organized a phone bank in Fall 2017 where 30,000 members called key congressional targets to voice their opposition, and distributed digital ads supporting the ACA to over a quarter million members.

UAW has less actively supported universal healthcare, instead focusing their energies on protecting the ACA. When asked about Medicare for All, UAW spokesperson Brian Rothenberg responded, "The UAW is focused on the millions of American's [sic] that face peril over anti-worker court challenges to the ACA that can negatively impact the economy and jobs. Regardless of how this sorts out, the ACA is an important first step and the UAW has a historic role in working toward health care as a right and not a privilege for all Americans."[66]

UAW worked with allies to support the full funding of the landmark Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which offers medical coverage for poor children who don't qualify for Medicaid.

Energy and Environment. The job security of its members in the auto industry is a central concern of the UAW. Thus, its position on energy policy is perhaps out of step with that of other progressive organizations. UAW supports efforts to create new industries and manufacturing jobs, including in the renewable energy sector. The UAW was involved in discussions that led to new fuel efficiency standards. The UAW has opposed the current administration's attempts to freeze fuel efficiency standards. The UAW also works to support the Renewable Fuel Standard which requires increased volumes of renewable fuels each year.

The UAW has criticized President Trump's climate change denial and his withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord. The UAW acknowledges climate change as a threat to "our security, our planet...our jobs [and] the jobs of our children and grandchildren".

The UAW has not endorsed the Green New Deal.

Immigration. The UAW has spoken out against the Trump administration's decision to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and has worked to make the program permanent.[67] The UAW calls for comprehensive immigration reform, believing that the current immigration system is detrimental to both native-born and immigrant workers, allowing employers to divide the workforce and depress wages and labor standards.

Relationship with U.S. Political Organizations. The UAW maintains close ties to the Democratic party. In the 2015-2016 electoral cycle, the UAW donated 1.2 million dollars to Democratic candidates; they did not donate to any Republican candidates. UAW endorsed Clinton for President. They donated to 132 different Democratic congressional candidates in total.

The UAW also donated heavily to prominent Democratic Party PACs in the same election cycle: $1 million to Priorities USA Action, $800,000 to House Majority PAC, $500,000 to Senate Majority PAC, and $210,000 each to the Democratic Senatorial and Congressional Campaign Committees. The biennial National CAP convention is a popular speaking venue for prominent Democratic figures, including Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, and Joe Biden.

UAW is a member of the AFL-CIO and was a founding member of the CIO (or Congress of Industrial Organizations) in 1935. The CIO was a federation of unions that broke off from the AFL in 1935 in opposition to the AFL's model of craft unionism, instead preferring a model of industrial unionism, i.e. the CIO favored organizing all workers in a particular industry rather than solely organizing a particular skilled craft. The CIO eventually merged with the AFL in 1955 to form the AFL-CIO.

Corruption Scandal. UAW is currently the subject of a federal investigation which has so far led to the sentencing of eight UAW and Fiat Chrysler officials. The main conspiracy involved the misuse of funds designated for worker training to pay for lavish gifts in the hopes of influencing UAW high-officials in Fiat Chrysler's favor during negotiations, as well as tax fraud and other acts of cover-up.

The on-going federal investigation has been widened to include worker centers run jointly by UAW with Ford and General Motors. In August 2019, former UAW-GM official Mike Grimes was accused of receiving $2 million in kickbacks and scheming to defraud union members and a worker training center, along with two unnamed UAW officials who are believed to be former UAW Vice President Joe Ashton and his top lieutenant Jeff Pietrzyk.

On August 28, FBI agents raided the homes of UAW President Gary Jones, previous UAW President Dennis Williams, Region 5 Director Vance Pearson, as well as three other UAW locations, in order to obtain evidence that could be used in the federal investigation.[68] On September 12, Pearson was charged with stealing member dues, with Jones named as a co-conspirator.[69]

These corruption allegations are limited to the UAW's auto sectors. However, we can anticipate that the MIT administration will use this corruption scandal against our organizing efforts at MIT if we were to affiliate with the UAW. This is a strategic public relations concern that we must consider in choosing our affiliate.

V.D.3 UE

On the Issues. UE's policy is set by rank-and-file delegates to the biennial national convention in the form of resolutions, which can be submitted by locals, Regional Councils, or the General Executive Board. Locals agree to work together on these issues on a voluntary basis, and there is no enforcement power compelling locals to adhere to national priorities.

Healthcare. UE has long called for "healthcare for all" or Medicare for all, both at the federal and state levels. UE believes that healthcare is a "fundamental human right" and should not be a "profit-making enterprise". UE is critical of the Affordable Care Act, saying that it "did not address containing costs for workers." That criticism notwithstanding, they oppose "all efforts to undermine the ACA, Medicare, Medicaid, and Veterans' Administration (VA) health benefits". UE supports restoring federal funding of Planned Parenthood and campaigns for paid parental and sick leave.

Energy and Environment. UE was the first union in the country to support the Green New Deal. UE believes that the "labor movement has a leading role to play in ensuring that this transition [to a clean energy economy] is just, humane, and based on solidarity and valuing people over profit". They have endorsed the September 2019 Global Climate Strikes.

UE calls for members to educate themselves about environmental justice and to build coalitions with environmental justice groups on the ground. UE calls for nationalizing the energy industry, as well as for a moratorium on nuclear power.[70]

Anti-racism. UE has made a commitment to "aggressive struggle against racism and in support of equal rights". They have called for the elimination of police brutality, stop-and-frisk, stand-your-ground, and call on all levels of the union to support and work with Black Lives Matter and other anti-racist organizations. UE opposes the assault on affirmative action, and directs its leadership to implement affirmative action measures within the union leadership and staff ranks. The UE Education Department is directed to provide workshops on racism and discrimination at all levels of the union, and locals are urged to study the Freedom Manifesto of the National Assembly for Black Liberation. UE also encourages locals to set up Unity Councils, councils within the local where members are trained to handle member-on-member conflict and "challenge discriminatory behavior of any kind".[71]

Anti-sexism. UE has been a pioneer in the labor movement for gender equality, taking a more progressive stance in the postwar period than any other union on women's issues, such as advocating "equal pay for equal work," resisting attempts to drive women out of the workplace after the war and to deny women seniority and maternity leave benefits.[72,73]

UE continues to call on the union to fight for pay equity and against gender oppression in the workplace; to empower women in union leadership; to implement trainings on sexual harassment and discrimination; and more. UE supports

the expansion of the Family Medical Leave Act; a federal paid parental leave and childcare program; greater employer accommodations for pregnant workers; and the expansion of programs that assist low-income families and children, such as WIC and SNAP.[74]

Immigration. UE demands an end to the Trump administration's policy of family separation and to the "concentration camps" in which they are interned. They call for the end of all travel bans, for the end of the VOICE program, for the repeal of Kate's Law, for a moratorium on ICE raids and E-Verify, for the end of all border wall construction, for the inclusion of immigrants in Medicare for All, and more.[75]

Foreign Policy. UE is critical of US militarism, criticizing the bipartisan support for an exorbitant military budget, the use of aggression and protracted wars to carry out the national interest, and the influence of private defense contractors on government.

UE has criticized "destabilizing" wars in the Middle East, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have also been critical of the US support for the Saudi Arabian intervention in the Yemeni civil war; increased tensions with Iran, including pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal and imposing economic sanctions; US attempts to turn back the pink tide in Latin America, including recent efforts to depose Venezuelan President Nicols Maduro; and the economic blockade of Cuba.

UE has been critical of US support for the Israeli government's "illegal" actions against the Palestinians. They have called for the US government to end to all military aid to Israel; to pressure Israel to end its occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and its siege of Gaza; and to "negotiate a peace agreement on the basis of equality, democracy, and human rights for the Palestinian and Israeli people, including Palestinian self-determination and the right of return for refugees". In September 2015, UE became the first labor union in the country to endorse the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.[76]

UE calls on all levels of the union to become involved with US Labor Against the War, About Face (a veterans anti-war group), and the BDS movement, and also to "inform and engage members on the need to change U.S. foreign policy to promote diplomacy, democracy, and workers rights". They also support their sister union Zenzoren in Japan (see passage on global solidarity below) in its efforts to close the US military bases in Japan.

Relationship with U.S. Political Organizations. According to then-UE general president Peter Knowlton, UE "are not fans of the Democratic party" and pride themselves on their independence. UE believes that "both parties are too closely tied to the wealthy and big corporations to be dependable advocates for working people" and has been critical of the AFL-CIO's close relationship with the Democratic Party. UE has supported the formation of an alternative political party for US labor, serving as founding members of the unsuccessful Labor Party in 1996.[77]

Nevertheless, UE made an exception in their endorsement of Senator Bernie Sanders for president, both in 2016 and 2020, with whom they have a strong, long-standing relationship.[78]

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, UE spent $4,172 on campaign funding in the 2010 election cycle: $250

on Bernie Sanders and the rest on Wisconsin Democratic politicians. We were not able to find any reported political spending by UE since 2010. UE does not have a national Political Action Committee (PAC) to support political candidates; this reflects their belief that fundraising has become a substitute for grassroots mobilization.

UE puts an emphasis on forming broad coalitions with other grassroots organizations to fight for its political agenda. UE claims to have strong connections with other unions and with pro-labor groups such as Jobs With Justice and Labor Notes. UE calls on all its regions, locals, members to become involved with "Our Revolution, Labor for Our Revolution, Black Lives Matter, Fight for $15, the Poor Peoples' Campaign, and other working-class movements for defense and justice."[78] In its fight for universal healthcare coverage, UE encourages its regions and locals to form coalitions with Labor Campaign for Single Payer, Physicians for a National Healthcare Program (PNHP), and Healthcare NOW![79] UE has made similar calls for coalition-building around a number of other issues as well.

UE is not a member of the AFL-CIO. Despite being one of the first unions to join the CIO in 1936, UE was expelled in 1949 as a part of the radical labor purges in the wake of the anti-labor federal Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.*

Global Solidarity. In their international politics, UE has been described as "a leading example of global labor solidarity."[80] UE is actively involved in the global justice movement opposing "corporate globalization" and has recognized the need to "work collaboratively across borders in order to effectively fight back against the multinational corporations that dominate our economy." UE views global worker solidarity not just as a means for creating better labor conditions worldwide, but, additionally, as a way for workers to exert influence over broader global issues, "everything from the renegotiation of [NAFTA] to the spectre of war on the Korean peninsula."[81]

UE has focused efforts on building coalitions with other labor unions around the world, particularly those in North America. UE has partnered with a Mexican union, the Frente Autntico del Trabajo (FAT), in fighting against aspects of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, which they view as detrimental to workers, among other issues facing both unions. UE has also started the North American Solidarity Project with Unifor, the largest private sector union in Canada, with the goal of building a "continental labor alliance based on democratic, militant, and social unionism."[82] They have also committed to deepening their relationship with Zenroren, a Japanese labor union federation, and to participating in the global union federation IndustriALL.[81]

*The Labor Management Relations Act of 1947, or Taft-Hartley Act, limited the power of labor unions by amending the NLRA. Taft-Hartley required unions to sign a loyalty oath pledging that they were not, nor ever had been, members of the Communist Party or any other subversive group, leading to the expulsion of radical, socialist, anarchist, and communist organizers from the labor movement. It also outlawed the closed shop (i.e. requirements that employers only hire union members), various types of worker actions like secondary boycotts, general strikes, and wildcat strikes, and enabled states to pass right-to-work legislation (see Appendix A).

VI Recommendation of the Affiliation Committee

Based on our extensive research and consideration of the available options for affiliation partners, assessment of our timeline, strategy, and organizational structure, and ongoing discussion among our membership, **the affiliation committee has arrived at a consensus to recommend that we affiliate with UE**. The reasons for this recommendation are specified in detail below.

1. **UE has demonstrated the greatest commitment to a rank-and-file, or member-led, organizing model.** This is evidenced in two main ways. Of our three affiliation options, UE is the most committed to working on behalf of its members. The union features structures that best promote member control of the national organization, and democratic decision-making at the local level.* This contrasts with more centralized, top-down, and top-heavy decision-making structures of UAW and AFT, especially UAW. Since our local would make up a significant portion of UE membership, our voice in national decision-making will be further amplified, to the extent we wish it to be.

   Second, the union is always organizing new workers and mobilizing its members to build power and achieve change, at the workplace and more broadly. According to UE, the union reportedly spends more per capita on organizing than most other national unions.[77] This contrasts with the narrower "service" model of unionism, which aims to win and enforce workplace contracts in exchange for dues, absent a commitment to continued movement-building and broader social change. While employer recognition and a strong contract is a goal of rank-and-file unions, it is not treated as the sole tool to improving graduate workers' lives. A rank-and-file union uses all the tools at its disposal to build member power. Depending on this broad source of power decreases reliance on legal or contractual battles and provides greater leverage against the employer.

2. **UE emphasizes and supports an issue-campaign organizing strategy, which we believe best prepares us for a prolonged campaign and tough environment.** The issue campaign strategy has been shown to generate meaningful near-term improvements in the lives of graduate workers, while building broad support for graduate unions. It holds the graduate union accountable to the membership. As we embark on our campaign to strengthen graduate mental health at MIT, the benefits of an issue-campaign model are already becoming apparent. An election-centered strategy aims to generate union support without first demonstrating that it is a model of collective action worth supporting.

   Further, the issue-campaign model is more resilient against volatility in the external environment. Labor organizing is challenging work. We face multiple roadblocks, including a hostile administration and shifts in the political environment. As workers in a "non-traditional" sector, our legal protections are constantly under assault. Often this work leads to fatigue and burnout. The administration has the resources to wait us out. A graduate organizing drive can lose momentum quickly if it lacks an issue-driven core to anchor it. An issue-campaign model requires us to maintain a strong internal organization, and it allows us to create change at MIT, independent of an election.

*For example, UE locals have their own constitution, UAWs do not; UAWs constitution mandates local officer positions and committees, UEs does not; Article 25 of UEs constitution (Rank-and-File Principles) is an exemplar of member democracy.

We have concerns about the ability of UAW's election-centered organizing model to win tough fights. One of the clearest distinctions we observe between UE and UAW is their position on issue campaigns. UAW prefers a direct-to-election strategy, as seen at BC, NEU, BU, and Harvard. Recent unsuccessful organizing drives in hostile Southern plants, including at a Nissan plant in Mississippi in 2017 and at a Volkswagen plant in Tennessee this past summer, illustrate the weakness of this strategy. In addition to bitter opposition from the employers and local politicians, some commentators have attributed these losses to UAW's inability to build the deep networks among the local community that are necessary to be resilient against employer attacks, and instead only mobilized workers in the immediate run-up to the election.[83,84]

3. **UE grants the greatest degree of local autonomy and flexibility.** This applies to a range of important dimensions of our organization, including our campaign strategy, our structure, our bargaining goals, our finances, and our political voice. This puts our union in the strongest possible position to serve our membership, to put their needs front and center, without having to balance any structural or substantive limitations imposed upon us by a larger organization. Further, with greater local autonomy, we will be more flexible in adapting to any potential changes in the environment for unions.

   As an important consideration, the flipside to this autonomy is that we may have less oversight from the national partner. This can manifest in issues of local misgovernance going unchecked, as was the case in the sobering account by the UNC organizer (although this case can be juxtaposed against Iowa's more positive experience with national intervention). *A high degree of local autonomy will require us to develop protections against internal abuses of power; to reject racism, sexism, and other forms of chauvinism within our union; and to ensure open, accessible communication channels with UE's national entity.*

4. **UE is willing to fight hard battles.** This is demonstrated through their support for pre-majority unions in states particularly hostile to labor (such as North Carolina, Iowa, and other Southern states) and through their engagement in issue campaigns.

5. **There are reports of UAW and AFT both interfering with local autonomy.** The challenges that student-organizers at selected UAW and AFT affiliates reportedly experienced drive home the importance of, and the benefits associated with, local autonomy. UAW student-organizers have complained of overinvolvement of staff in negotiations at Columbia, have at times struggled for control of resources and local representation at NYU, and have had their political voice stifled at UC Berkeley. Both cases reflect limitations on the autonomy of unions affiliated with UAW. AFT has so severely overstepped the autonomy of some of their locals that we believe that AFT is the least appealing option of the three and strongly recommend against it. The controversy at UPenn demonstrates both clear issues with tenuous commitment from AFT as well as the risks of overreliance on national resources. AFT involvement has also been characterized by some locals as being an obstacle, including claims of dues mismanagement and conciliatory bargaining in contract negotiations.

6. **Though UE may be the smallest of our options, we believe that we will have access to the most critical resources.** The most critical support that our local will need from a national partner in our current phase is strategic advice and regular progress evaluation. UE has already provided us with strategic input on our mental health campaign issue campaign, demonstrating the utility of this input. In addition, UE has committed

to providing staff organizers, skills training, and legal assistance, as needed.

Some may argue that UAW and AFT, as larger unions, could offer us more material support, for example with media materials, website development, and political lobbying. While these resources can be useful, they do not win campaigns. In some ways, a dependence on staff organizers, lawyers, and money to win a campaign rather than the strength of the members can have a demobilizing effect, depriving a campaign of its most powerful resource: rank-and-file involvement.

Our union has shown itself to be rather resourceful over the past months without the help of a larger union, developing internal capacity to run a mental health campaign, hold organizer trainings, create and distribute media materials like social media and flyers, conduct research on topics related to the union, and more. Within our organization we have access to an incredible amount of professional capacity, including experienced journalists, community organizers, data scientists, and former union professional staff. Additionally, a number of other graduate employee unions, including some affiliated with UAW (e.g. UAW-GEO 2322 at UMass Amherst) and AFT, use funds from their local membership to hire professional staff (e.g. labor lawyers) to support their efforts when needed. The large size of our graduate student-worker population would allow us to build up a considerable budget from standard dues. We lack experienced negotiators and legal expertise, but for this we can turn to our national partner.

Additionally, affiliation with a union that has a large local presence like UAW does not necessarily offer us greater access to resources and solidarity. UAW campaigns at Boston College, Boston University, and Northeastern have all stalled, and members of the Harvard Graduate Student Union have told us in private correspondence that resources have gradually been pulled from other local graduate union campaigns and diverted to Harvard. Furthermore, we dont expect the amount of solidarity we receive from other area grad unions to be dependent on our affiliation; in general, unions tend to support other unions regardless of affiliation. We have had good relationships with both UAW and SEIU-affiliated locals in the area, and we dont expect this to change if we affiliate with UE.

Part of UEs organizing model involves building strong connections to the local community, both inside and outside the workplace. Outside of the workplace, they cultivate relationships with local labor and social justice organizations, such as Jobs With Justice and other area unions. We believe that such an organic approach to organizing represents additional resources for us to tap into in addition to MIT student-workers and union staff.

7. **The widening UAW corruption scandal is a liability.** Though the corruption charges and convictions are limited to the union's auto leadership, it is an easy target for the opposition. MIT and an anti-union campaign will almost certainly use the corruption scandal against us if we partner with UAW.

   In addition, the scandal also creates a large amount of uncertainty about the future direction of the organization. It seems plausible that more senior leadership, perhaps even the President, could be implicated, leading to a potentially chaotic leadership transition. Some legal scholars have not ruled out the possibility of the Justice Department pursuing a civil racketeering case against UAW, which could lead to the government intervening

in the union as they did with the Teamsters in the late eighties.[85]

As we build our power, it is critical that we ask ourselves what our vision is for how we wish to shape our union now and what kind of union we are creating for future graduate workers at MIT. By partnering with UE, we will make a commitment to rank-and-file organizing and building a robust graduate employee organization at MIT.

Appendices

A "Right-to-work" laws

Under federal law, employees in a unionized workplace are not required to join the union. The union, however, is responsible for representing non-members and union members alike in contract negotiations with the employer. Most union contracts have provisions that require non-members to pay "agency fees," also called "fair share fees," comparable to the cost of membership dues. These agency fees help to cover the costs of mandatory union representation expenses and ensure the costs of doing so are shared equally across those whom the contract benefits; they do not fund the union's political activity. Under federal law, unions are expressly prohibited from using such fees for anything but representation.

In states with so-called "right-to-work" laws (which actually aim to defund and debilitate unions rather than providing additional rights to workers), non-members are no longer required to pay agency fees. Unions that operate under these laws find themselves simultaneously required to support and represent an entire workplace with only a fraction of workers' pooled resources, creating a free-rider problem that can lead to underfunding. While Massachusetts does not currently have "right-to-work" laws on the books, the 2018 Supreme Court case *Janus v. AFSCME District Council 31* applied "right to work" laws to all public employees throughout the country, a large segment of whom are unionized.

The decision has prompted unions, especially those with large public-sector memberships like the AFT and UE, to consider new forms of base-building and revenue. This decision has had a significant impact on the standard operating procedures for a number of international unions, and it is important to keep this context in mind when considering the organizing strategy and structure of these unions.

B NLRB proposed rule

As previously explained, a voluntary recognition strategy prevents the NLRB from reversing precedent and ruling graduate employees at private universities ineligible to bargain collectively. However, it is important to note that the board now intends to achieve this reversal of precedent in a different manner, through a lengthy "rulemaking" process. The proposed rule was released in September 2019.* There is a public notice and comment period, until November 22, 2019. The board then must consider comments and issue a final rule. As far as we understand from our initial research, rules lay out more general conditions that regional NLRB adjudicators have to follow when applying the law to the facts before them (in a representation/election petition, for instance), and so if the rules are narrow (in that they define a limited set of conditions under which graduate students are employees), then that would make it harder for student-workers like us aiming to unionize. The rule would have to be complied with by any regional adjudicator and it could overturn Columbia explicitly by setting forth a new test.

A rule that overturns our employment status is likely to produce different outcomes, depending on our campaign stage. In the event the final rule takes effect during an active contract, then the contract will hold; the MIT administration, however, will not be obligated to bargain again once the contract expires. This happened at NYU, following the expiration of their first contract in 2005, following the 2004 Brown decision. Fortunately, graduate workers organized successfully against the administration's intransigence to win their second contract in 2015 (a year before Columbia).

All this means is that we have to stay the course. Voluntary recognition of our union remains our best strategy. We win recognition by building broad and deep commitment from our community through targeted issue campaigns and continued, bottom-up organizing. In the meantime, in an effort to delay and ultimately stop the new rule, AFT, UAW, and UNITE HERE have together established an online portal through which graduate employees and their supporters can issue comments: https://www.gradsfightback.org. The deadline is November 22, 2019. We encourage everyone to make your voice heard.

*A copy of the proposed rule is here.

C Summary of Official Communications with Union Officials and Graduate Student Organizers from AFT, UAW, and UE

Full notes from all communications are available upon request from mitgradunion@gmail.com.

AFT	
AFT National Meeting	02/22/19
University of Chicago Student Organizer Call	03/06/19
Northwestern Organizing Call	03/14/19
University of Michigan Staff Organizer Call	03/15/19
Oregon State University Union President Call	03/18/19
University of Chicago Student Organizer Call	03/19/19
Portland State University Union President Call	03/21/19
University of Wisconsin Student Organizer Call	03/31/19
Princeton Student Organizer Call	04/03/19
Brown Student Organizer Call	04/04/19
University of Pennsylvania Student Organizer Call	04/18/19
AFT Staff Organizer Call	04/22/19
Brown Student Organizer Call	04/30/19
AFT State Federation Call	05/10/19
University of Illinois Chicago Organizing Chair Call	05/14/19
AFT Massachusetts Leadership Meeting	06/13/19
UAW	
UAW Regional Staff Organizer Meeting	11/30/18
UAW Regional Director Meeting	01/12/19
Harvard Student Organizer Call	02/27/19
Columbia Student Organizer Call	03/22/19
New York University Student Organizer Call	03/26/19
Columbia Past Student Organizer Call	04/02/19
University of Massachusetts Amherst Student Organizer Call	04/05/19
Columbia AWDU Student Organizer Call	04/12/19
University of California Berkeley Student Organizer Call	04/12/19
Northeastern Student Organizer Call	04/22/19
UAW Staff Organizer Call	04/23/19
Harvard Staff Organizer Call	04/26/19
UAW Staff Organizer Call	09/09/19
UE	
UE President Call	03/25/19

UE Staff Organizer Call	04/03/19
UE President Call	04/19/19
University of Iowa Student Organizer Call	05/01/19
NC State Student Organizer Call	05/07/19
Undisclosed ”Right to work” State School Student Organizer Call	05/08/19
UE President and Staff Organizer Meeting	06/07/19
UE Staff Organizer Call	07/31/19
UE President Call	08/09/19
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